

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6564

As of January 23, 1996

Title: An act relating to the wastewater discharge permit program.

Brief Description: Implementing fee changes and tax credits for the wastewater discharge permit program.

Sponsors: Senators Fraser, Swecker, Loveland, Rasmussen, Roach, Cantu, Hargrove, Schow, Winsley and Finkbeiner.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ecology & Parks: 1/25/96.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY & PARKS

Staff: Kari Guy (786-7437)

Background: Any person who conducts a commercial or industrial operation which results in the disposal of waste into the waters of the state is required to obtain a wastewater discharge permit from the Department of Ecology. Until 1988, the permit program was funded through the general fund. In 1988, Initiative 97 was approved, which requires holders of discharge permits to pay fees to cover the administrative costs of issuing the permits.

The Department of Ecology is required to develop a fee schedule based on the complexity of permit issuance and the toxicity and amount of pollutants. The fee schedule is adopted by rule, and may be amended no more often than every two years. All fees collected are deposited in the water quality permit account, to be used for the purposes of administering wastewater permits.

Summary of Bill: Findings are made that the current wastewater discharge permit fee structure has an inherent lack of fairness, and that there are benefits to be gained by basing the fee structure on a workload approach.

A fee schedule is established for categories of discharges. The fee schedule expires June 30, 1997. The Department of Ecology is directed to conduct a workload analysis biennially, and prepare a biennial budget based on the resource requirements identified in the workload analysis.

The Department of Ecology is directed to establish a program of compliance cost incentives for permittees. The department must report to the Legislature on development of the program by December 1, 1996, and must implement the program by July 1, 1997.

A tax credit against the business and occupation tax is provided for qualifying small businesses and municipalities. The tax credit is not to exceed one-half the wastewater discharge permit fee.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 18, 1996.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. The tax credit provisions of the bill take effect July 1, 1996.